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Officer Robert J. Mata
Los Angeles Police Department

Date of Birth: October 13, 1973
Date Appointed: January 22, 1998
End of Watch: September 19, 2000

Officer Robert "Bobby Joe" Mata, 26, died Tuesday, Sept. 19, 2000, after a call for assistance, and as he lay dying, 10 of his colleagues made a futile effort to save him.

Sgt. John Pasquale witnessed the frantic effort. "Ten cops in uniform tried to get a police officer to see a black-and-white cracked up like that," he said.

Mata and his partner, Officer Sonny Patsenhann, were enroute to a house investigation with a suspect. Mata lost control of his police vehicle and was trapped.

Responding officers were able to remove Patsenhann through the back of the car in an hour to cut the car's top off and extricate Mata. Mata was finally being pulled from the wreckage. Mata underwent two hours of surgery, but on its own, he was not able to overcome the trauma.

Patsenhann, who was injured in the crash, was treated and released.

On Monday, Sept. 25, after his death Mata was lifted up by his family. His daughters, Kalei, 5, and Pi-Lani, 2; and his parents had a flag-draped coffin on its gravesite. Kalei had just celebrated her 5th birthday.

Los Angeles Police Department's chief, Bernard G. Parks, at the funeral services at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, M.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Elwood and Hawthorne was the

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Los Angeles Police Department's chief, Bernard C. Parks, at interment services at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, M

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Rowland Heights was the Mata as a man who was friendly to everyone, even gangbangers recalled Mata looking "like hell" one day as a police inspector stopping in front of Mata, demanded to know why his boots, polish for my boots or milk for my kids."

Another incident that told about Mata was when he was investigating the suspect's house. As other members of the detail dived for

Officer Javier Arenado told the gathering, "Robert told me I was dirty," Arenado continued, "You know, Bobby was always the

Arenado concluded his eulogy looking out at Mata's widow, and to speak through his tears.

Neighbors recalled Mata as a jovial, energetic man best known. Ramirez, said Mata "was such a good kid, and so careful about

Deputy city attorney, Elizabeth Greenwood, who worked with him in June. "It was for outstanding service in crime suppression, police officer who dealt with everybody with honor and respect

The funeral drew an overflow crowd of nearly 2,000 to the cemetery

Msgr. Killeen told the mourners that Mata was "a surrogate father" in circumstances of Mata's death taking place enroute to helping his friends. He was committed, he was filled with love, and he

As the Mass began, a hymn set the tone of the gathering. "I

Mata, a six-year veteran of the Los Angeles Police Dept., was promoted from the agency in three years to die in the line of duty.

Mata's wife, Holly, is a recent graduate of the Los Angeles State

A trust fund has been established for Officer Mata's children. Station, 2175 South John S. Gibson Blvd., San Pedro, CA 90732. The name of Robert Mata, may be made to: The Los Angeles



Officer Robert J. Mata
Los Angeles Police Department

Date of Birth: October 13, 1973
Date Appointed: January 22, 1996
End of Watch: September 19, 2000

Officer Robert "Bobby Joe" Mata, 26, died Tuesday, Sept. 19, when his patrol car slammed into a light pole. Mata was responding to another officer's call for assistance, and as he lay dying, 10 of his colleagues from Los Angeles Police Department lifted his patrol car off the ground and moved it in a futile effort to save him.

Sgt. John Pasquale witnessed the frantic effort. "Ten cops literally lifted the wreckage and moved it," he said. "It's a very emotional experience for a police officer to see a black-and-white cracked up like that; unfortunately we've seen it too many times."

Mata and his partner, Officer Sonny Patsenhann, were enroute to a back-up request from a fellow officer who was involved with a stolen vehicle investigation with a suspect. Mata lost control of his police vehicle on a curve and collided with a cement light post. Both Mata and Patsenhann were trapped.

Responding officers were able to remove Patsenhann through the passenger window but, unfortunately, it took the Los Angeles Fire Department paramedics an hour to cut the car's top off and extricate Mata. He talked with paramedics during the ordeal, but went into cardiac arrest as he was finally being pulled from the wreckage. Mata underwent two hours of surgery, but because of his injuries coupled with the length of time his heart had not beaten on its own, he was not able to overcome the trauma of the accident.

Patsenhann, who was injured in the crash, was treated and released from the hospital later the same day.

On Monday, Sept. 25, after his death Mata was lifted up by his colleagues one last time and carried to his grave. While a bagpipe wailed and his wife, Holly; his daughters, Kalei, 5, and Pi-Lani, 2; and his parents, Robert and Josephina Mata; watched in grief, eight uniformed pallbearers set down his flag-draped coffin on its gravesite. Kalei had just celebrated her fifth birthday the previous day.

Los Angeles Police Department's chief, Bernard C. Parks, as well as hundreds of police officers from throughout California, stood at attention for the interment services at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, Mata's native city.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Rowland Heights was the setting for funeral services honoring Mata. Colleagues choked back sobs as they described Mata as a man who was friendly to everyone, even gangbangers, and relished nothing more than a good joke. Mata's supervisor, Sgt. Rick Plows recalled Mata looking "like hell" one day as a police inspector made his way down a line of otherwise impeccably turned-out cops. The inspector, stopping in front of Mata, demanded to know why his boots, among other things, looked so shabby. Mata replied, according to Plows, "Sir, it's either polish for my boots or milk for my kids."

Another incident that told about Mata was when he was investigating a theft. Something resembling a hand grenade came flying from the front door of the suspect's house. As other members of the detail dived for cover, Mata discovered that the object was nothing more than a doorknob.

Officer Javier Arenado told the gathering, "Robert told me later that he wanted to smother the doorknob like a hero, but he didn't want to get his uniform dirty." Arenado continued, "You know, Bobby was always the light at the end of the tunnel."

Arenado concluded his eulogy looking out at Mata's widow, daughters and parents, and stating "We loved him, and we will never forget him," barely able to speak through his tears.

Neighbors recalled Mata as a jovial, energetic man best known for walking barefoot, regardless of the weather. Neighbor and family friend, Tauribio Ramirez, said Mata "was such a good kid, and so careful about avoiding trouble. He never wanted to have anything to do with criminals or gang kids."

Deputy city attorney, Elizabeth Greenwood, who worked with Mata for 18 months, said he received a commendation from the Los Angeles City Council in June. "It was for outstanding service in crime suppression and reclaiming the community," she stated. "I'll miss him. He was a sweet, quiet, outstanding police officer who dealt with

everybody with honor and respect. A joy to be around."

The funeral drew an overflow crowd of nearly 2,000 to the church to hear a Mass celebrated by Bishop Gambio Zavala and Msgr. Michael Killeen.

Msgr. Killeen told the mourners that Mata was "a surrogate for all men and women who are sworn to our defense." He recalled the poignant circumstances of Mata's death taking place enroute to helping a colleague. Killeen continued, "It can be said, truly, Bobby Joe Mata laid down his life for his friends. He was committed, he was filled with love, and I'm sure that memory will never be forgotten."

As the Mass began, a hymn set the tone of the gathering. "I will lift you up," the lyrics called out, and for Bobby Joe Mata, it seemed a fitting refrain.

Mata, a six-year veteran of the Los Angeles Police Dept. who was assigned to the Harbor Special Enforcement Unit Gang Detail, was the fifth officer from the agency in three years to die in the line of duty.

Mata's wife, Holly, is a recent graduate of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Academy.

A trust fund has been established for Officer Mata's children, donations may be sent to: The Robert Mata Blue Ribbon Trust, c/o Harbor Area Police Station, 2175 South John S. Gibson Blvd., San Pedro, CA 90731. Donations to the Blue Ribbon Trust are not tax-deductible. Tax-deductible donations in the name of Robert Mata, may be made to: The Los Angeles Police Memorial Foundation, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

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